

NORTH STAR

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
September 2022

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UCC

September 2022

Gathered Since 1730

**Serving, Welcoming, Growing in
Christ**

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Sara Nichols

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From The Pastor

Greetings Beloved in Christ,

I thank my God always when I mention you in my prayers, because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. I pray that the partnership of your faith may become effective as you comprehend all the good that we share in Christ. I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my [siblings in Christ]. (Philemon 1:4-7)

As I sit here, trying to craft my pastor's letter for the September North Star, I am deeply struck by the miraculous feeling that we are beginning a new program year, in a new place of work and worship. After everything that has occurred the past 4 years, I am overwhelmed with gratitude to our God who has made our transition to this point possible.

We are indeed in a time of oasis, with space for reflection and discernment. 79 Clinton Street isn't the last stop for First Congregational Church of Concord, yet it is a *vital* part of our journey. Sharing space with another congregation that is of similar heart and mind in how we read and enact the Gospel is a gift of God's grace and mercy. Let us be intentional about drawing strength, nourishment, presence, and peace from this interim time of physical space.

With that intention in mind, into this first month of the program year, I offer four thematic ideas for rumination: A New Identity; Growing in God's Love; Prayerful Living; and Surprising Investment.

- 1) You will be receiving a letter from Tim Wildman in the next week or so, inviting you to participate in the discernment of who First Church will become for the near future - building together, a new identity.
- 2) The time of the pandemic has given us all a chance to reflect on our priorities and most of us have witnessed those priorities change in ourselves and in others. It has become apparent in churches around the country that growing in God's Love as a community **MUST** become an intentional priority in this century. It no longer happens by osmosis, the way that it did in the past, when everyone spent all of their time at church. As Paul said, "I pray that the partnership of your faith may become effective as you comprehend all the good that we share in Christ." We must be willing to be held accountable as we discover all the ways that God is calling us deeper in our faith and in our relationship as followers of Christ.

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3) One of the things that the Church (universal) failed to teach followers of Jesus in the last century is how to actively be in relationship with God. We were all taught - very well - how to believe in God. Yet, most folks are at a loss about what to do next. "Okay, I believe in God. Now what?" As an example: I believe that sewing machines exist. I've even had sightings of one or two! Yet, I am COMPLETELY at a loss of what I would do if one was placed in front of me. If my life depended on using it, I would die. That may sound like an extreme - however, if you ask most 12-steppers, they will tell you that their active and deep relationship with their higher power saves their life every day and that simply believing in a higher power isn't enough. Choosing to live an active prayerful life, in which the goal is to truly be in relationship with God, may just be the only thing that "saves" the Church (universal) from extinction.

4) Finally, I get the sense that quite a few folks feel that if First Church is able to rise from the ashes of transformation, that it will be a surprising investment from God in our future. Why surprising? Because we are still grappling with feelings of unworthiness and self-pity as a

congregation. God is ready and willing to shower First Church with a typhoon of goodness and opportunities for spreading the Gospel of Love! Yet, we either can't or won't accept them - yet. We need to be willing to stop running from our past. We must ask for God's help in allowing us to see and acknowledge our past with open eyes and hearts, and then let it go.

This year God is inviting us into a unique balance of rest and work: time for deep restorative breaths and for delving deep into the question "Into what ministry is God calling First Church?" And if the Holy Spirit has anything to say about it, I can guarantee that there will be fun along the way!

Autumn's Blessings of Bounty,
Pastor Emilia



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Spiritual Life Ministry

We are looking forward to seeing you at our Regathering/Recommitment Sunday, Sept. 11. We will be gathering with the Wesley Methodist congregation for a Pot Luck Luncheon, 11:30 - 12:30. First Church has been asked to provide finger desserts, our own plate and silverware and a lawn chair. Hopefully, weather permitting, we'll be eating outside in the shade of their beautiful trees. Our reception by Wesley United Methodists has been most friendly and welcoming. Come see for yourself!

First church worship on Sept. 11 will take place at 1:00 in the sanctuary. We're planning for an overflow crowd—too large for the 28 seats in our chapel—with special music by choir and band.

We're hoping that this Regathering/Recommitting Sunday will be the beginning of renewed participation by members. Our worship services have been inspiring and energizing, a helpful balm for the bad news with which we are daily deluged on various media. Our faith and the messages in our worship services offer continued hope. Come hear!

There are other fall events that will be restarting. Page Turners will be meeting the fourth Monday of each month, 2- 3:00. This month, we will be meeting in person at Wesley United Methodist chapel to discuss "Heartwood: The Art of Living, with the End in Mind."

The Anti-racism Study Group will be meeting the first and third Tuesday of the month from 7 - 8 pm on Zoom. The study book for this group will be "The Black Friend: On Being a Better White Person." This group plans to visit some of the New Hampshire Black Heritage Trail sites. Come test the waters. See how enlightening, stimulating and often fun these gatherings are for participants.

Pastor Emilia will continue to visit with our Havenwood members the second Thursday of the month.

Jazz Sanctuary will continue to be held the third Sunday of the month. Watch for themes and times and the beautiful banner that will be promoting our Jazz Sanctuary Worship Service.

This new chapter in the life of First Church is just beginning. We hope you will join in the journey as we move into our future. We will be meeting to discuss our mission, our hopes, and our plans. Watch for dates and times coming up this fall.

Eleanor Kimball, Spiritual Life Ministry Team



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Ministry of Outreach

Crop Walk: Crop Walk is Saturday, September 24th at Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Registration is at noon. Introductions and announcements will be at 12:30 PM and the walk is starting at 1:00 PM. It is a "normal" walk with refreshments afterward.

**Please support a walker or sign up to walk and raise money for a good cause.
See Tim Wildman or Sara Nichols.**

School Kits and Clean Up Buckets:

Thank you to all who have purchased items for the school kits. Please continue to take advantage of the sales and be sure to purchase blunt tip scissors and 30 centimeter / 12" rulers. We will need bags for all these items; so, get out your sewing machines and make a few bags. The directions for making them can be found at cwskits.org. Items needed for the cleanup bucket can be found at the same site. Most of the items needed can be bought at the Dollar store.

Strengthen the Church: Thank you to all who donated to Strengthen the Church. A total of the amount received will be in the next North Star.

Neighbors in Need: Neighbors in Need is our fall UCC fund raiser. The money raised supports ministries of justice and compassion. This year's motto is "BEHOLD." One third of the offering supports Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). 2/3 are used by justice and witnesses' ministries to provide grants to UCC churches and organizations.

We collect this offering on Sunday, October 2nd, 2022 as part of World Communion Sunday.

Sara Nichols, Outreach



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Technology Corner

Everyone knows that you can't believe everything you see or read on the Internet. This month I want to share with you one of my favorite resources for determining the veracity of something I've found online - Snopes.com.

According to their website, Snopes is "the Internet's definitive fact-checking resource." When they choose an item to research, it's assigned to a member of their staff who will attempt to contact the source of the claim for elaboration and to gather supporting information. They will also attempt to contact individuals and organizations who would be knowledgeable about, or have relevant expertise in, the subject at hand. In addition, they will search for printed information (New articles, scientific journals, interview transcripts, etc.) that have bearing on the subject. Other members of the Snopes.com staff may also provide input and the final product must be cleared by their editorial staff before it's posted to their website. This is a far cry from most of what's posted on the Internet, which goes through no editorial process at all.

When searching for "United Church of Christ" on Snopes.com, the first article that comes up is titled "Barack Obama - Trinity United Church of Christ." Here is a small part of their report:

Claim: Illinois senator Barack Obama's church has a "non-negotiable commitment to Africa" that is covertly Muslim and excludes non-blacks.

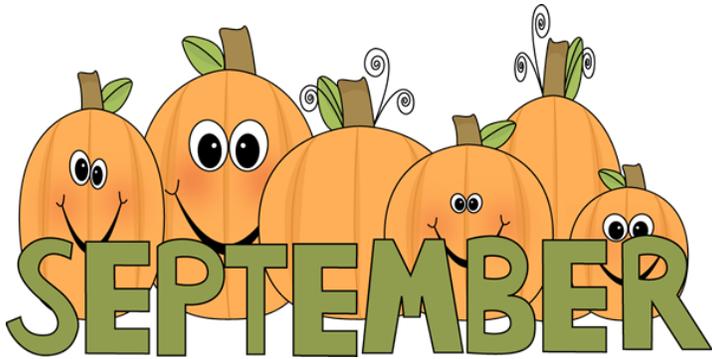
Status: False.

Origins: It is true that Illinois senator (and Democratic presidential hopeful) Barack Obama has been associated with Chicago's Trinity United Church of Christ (a single church which is part of the United Church of Christ denomination) for about twenty years, and it is true that TUCC describes its congregation as "an African people" who remain "true to our native land." However, it is not true that Barack Obama "desires to rule over America" (he's running for the office of president, not king), or that he is a "covert worshiper of the Muslim faith" (both he and the TUCC are Christian). It is also not true that non-blacks are shunned by TUCC, as Martin E. Marty of the University of Chicago Divinity School related from personal experience...

As you can see, they provide an unbiased assessment of the issue at hand. At the bottom of the article they list all the sources used in creating their report so you're able to verify the accuracy of their reporting if you'd like. Snopes.com got their start researching urban legends, so if you're interested in some fun & informative reading, click on their "Archives" section and choose a subject area to start reading about!

Jock Irvine, Technology

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September Birthdays

Linda Sims – 9/3

Sheila Swenson – 9/6

Everett Sims – 9/8

Jonathan Huntington – 9/12

David May – 9/18

Rev. Rebecca Clar – 9/21

Sara Slawski – 9/26

PRAYER CONCERNS

If you would like your name included in the weekly bulletin prayer list, please contact our church administrator, Kathy. (secretary@concordfirstchurch.org)

The Prayer Circle asks you to keep in prayer for the following members and friends:

- Elizabeth Hardy – Hope
- Deborah Goodwin - Healing
- Faith Clark - Healing
- Kellie Heath - Healing
- Nancy Sanborn – Healing
- Dot Cassady - Hope
- Family of Rev. Johanna Young - Peace
- Pam Spain – Healing
- Doug King – Healing
- The family of Ruth Lyon – Peace
- The family of Betty Andrew
- The family of Susan Butts – Peace
- Everett Sims – Healing
- Family of Cedric "Dusty" Dustin, Jr. - Peace
- Ed Raczka - Healing

